



Washington State Department of Agriculture

PO Box 42560
Olympia, Washington 98504-2560
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Contact: [Mike Louisell](#) (360) 902-1813

\$3.2 million in federal grants for Washington's specialty crops

OLYMPIA - The [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) received word that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approved the state's application for \$3.2 million in grant funding for nearly two dozen projects that will support the state's fruit, vegetable and horticulture growers.

In all, [the 2013 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant](#) will fund 23 projects managed by WSDA in partnership with other organizations to benefit Washington's specialty crop industry, the third largest in the nation. Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture.

This year, wine and cider, pears and blueberries, even Christmas trees, are among the industries benefiting from the grants. The awards for individual projects range from \$40,000 to \$238,000 and will go to agricultural commodity commissions, agricultural associations, non-profit organizations and Washington State University. Nine of the recipients are receiving these grants for the first time. The rules require the projects to be completed within three years.

This year's projects include those that expand exports into new markets, increase the number of new specialty crop farmers, resolve critical pest and disease issues, build markets for emerging specialty crops, address resource issues including energy, water and labor, or develop new specialty crop varieties. Visit www.agr.wa.gov/Grants/SCBGP to see the list of projects.

The USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program was created to support the competitiveness of the specialty crop industry. Visit www.ams.usda.gov/scbgrp for more information from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

In awarding these funds, WSDA selected projects that will directly benefit specialty crop producers within the next five years, address critical issues to the industry and contain strong performance measures. Projects that included matching funds or in-kind donations by the applicant were given priority.

Each year, WSDA conducts a competitive solicitation process to award the funding. For this round, 74 pre-proposals were whittled down to 42 full proposals. A 15-member industry review panel then selected from those the most promising projects to include in the state's single grant application to the USDA.

WSDA has received more than \$16 million over the past six years for projects supported by the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Only California and Florida have received higher funding levels. Future funding opportunities are dependent on the 2013 Farm Bill, currently pending authorization by Congress.

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